

Absentee Voting Information for U.S. Citizens Abroad

VOTING IS NOW EASIER THAN EVER BEFORE:

Now all U.S. citizens can receive their blank ballots electronically. Depending on the state in which you are eligible to vote, you may get your ballot by email, fax, or internet download. To start, go to www.FVAP.gov to complete a new Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), print and sign the form then return it to your local election office in the United States. We recommend overseas U.S. citizens get in the habit of completing FPCAs each January. You should include your email address on the form so it's easier for your election officials to reach you if there is a problem. If your state delivers ballots electronically by fax only, be sure to include your fax number. If you request electronic delivery and include your email address or fax number, you'll receive your blank ballot 45 days before general and mid-term elections and generally 30 days before special, primary, and run-off elections for federal offices. Most states now have voter registration verification websites, and many offer a means of tracking the status of your registration and ballot.

IMPORTANT NOTE: States are no longer required to automatically send ballots to voters for an entire election cycle so everyone who wants to vote in U.S. elections from overseas should send in a new Federal Post Card Application in January of each year.

See below for additional information on:

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Absentee Voting Basics

Absentee voting is a simple 2 step process.

1. Every year, you send in a completed Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to your local election officials.
 - They confirm your eligibility to vote, and put your name on a list to receive absentee ballots for any elections held that calendar year.
 - They send you a blank absentee ballot electronically or by mail.
- 2(a). You complete the ballot and send it back so it arrives before your state's ballot return deadline.
- 2(b). Or, if you haven't received your blank ballot 30 days before an election, don't wait any longer; [use the emergency Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot](#) to vote.

Registration/Absentee Ballot Request

To vote from abroad, you have to register to vote with local election officials in your state of legal (voting) residence, AND every year you have to request to receive absentee ballots. You can use one form to do both - the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA). Submit a new FPCA in January of each year, every time you move, change your address, change your email, or change your name.

To complete and address the form, go to either the [Federal Voting Assistance Program](#) or the [Overseas Vote Foundation](#) website, where an on-line assistant walks you through the process. You can also pick up an FPCA and a copy of your state's requirements from U.S. embassies and consulates around the world, or from many overseas U.S. citizen civic or political groups.

You can always return your FPCA by mail. In addition, most states allow you to send in your FPCA by fax or email. (See [Voting and Returning Your Ballot](#) below for options) Consult the online [FVAP Voting Assistance Guide](#) for your state's current instructions. If you need help completing or submitting the form, contact the voting assistance officer at the [closest U.S. embassy or consulate](#).

Receiving Your Blank Absentee Ballot

Forty-five days before the November general elections, your state will either send your blank ballot to you electronically, or mail it to the address you provided on your FPCA.

Ballots are generally mailed out only 30 days before primary, special and run-off elections. Depending on your state and your status abroad, you may receive absentee ballots for all elections or abbreviated ballots for elections for federal offices only.

Voting and Returning Your Ballot

Complete your ballot carefully and legibly, and return it to your local election officials before your state's ballot receipt deadline. Send it back as early as possible.

Overseas voters have a number of options for returning voted ballots:

- **Local mail** – If you have good mail service to the United States, put your ballot in the mail with appropriate international postage.
- **U.S. Embassy Pouch/APO/FPO** – You can drop off your ballot request or voted ballot at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for return to the United States, or you can have someone drop it off for you. It must be addressed to your local election officials and have sufficient postage or be in a postage-paid envelope. A postage-paid envelope is available on the [FVAP web site](#). Contact the voting assistance officer or visit the Embassy website for specific instructions.
- **Fax, Email, or Internet** - A number of states now allow the electronic return of voted ballots. Consult the [Federal Voting Assistance Program's Voting Assistance Guide](#) for electronic transmission options for your state.
- **Express Courier Service** - If time is short or local mail is unreliable, you can use professional courier services such as FedEx, DHL, or UPS. **NOTE:** FedEx does not deliver to P.O. boxes.

Using an Emergency Write-in Ballot

Don't be a passive voter and wait for a ballot that may not reach you in time. If you followed all the right steps but still haven't received your ballot 30 days before the election, you should complete and submit a Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB). Contact the Voting Assistance Officer at the [nearest U.S. embassy or consulate](#) for help, or visit [FVAP.gov](#) to complete the FWAB using their [online wizard](#). Write in the candidates of your choice, print it, sign it and send it to your [local election officials](#). If your regular absentee ballot arrives later, fill it out and send it back too. Your FWAB will be counted only if your regular ballot doesn't reach your local election officials by your state's deadline. Following this procedure will not invalidate your vote or result in two votes being cast.

Voting Eligibility

Almost all U.S. citizens 18 years or older who reside outside the United States are eligible to vote absentee for candidates for federal offices in U.S. primary and general elections. In addition, some states

allow overseas citizens to vote for candidates for state and local offices, as well as for state and local referendums. For information regarding your specific state, visit the [Federal Voting Assistance Program's Voting Assistance Guide](#) or the [Overseas Vote Foundation](#) website. The Overseas Vote Foundation is a non-partisan voter advocacy organization.

For voting purposes, your [state of legal residence](#) is generally the state wherein you resided immediately before leaving the United States, even if you no longer own or rent property or intend to return there in the future. [Twenty-four states](#) and the District of Columbia specifically allow U.S. citizens who have never resided in the United States to register where a parent would be eligible to vote. Direct your questions about eligibility to your [local election officials](#).

Role of Local Election Officials

All elections in the United States are run at the state and local level. If local election officials have questions about your form, they'll contact you. It's smart to send in your form early (ideally, at the beginning of the calendar year, or at least forty-five days before the election) to provide time to process your request and resolve any problems. Once approved, your name will be put on a list of voters to receive absentee ballots.

Verifying Your Registration

Most states now have websites where you can verify your registration. If you are unsure of your voter registration status, or want to confirm that local officials have received and approved your registration, check the FVAP website for a [directory of state voter registration verification websites](#). You can also write, email or call your [local election officials](#) directly.

Be an Educated Voter

Check out the [FVAP links page](#) for helpful resources that will aid your research of candidates and issues you care about.

Voting and Taxes

Voting for candidates for *federal* offices does not affect your **federal or state tax liability**. Voting for candidates for state or local offices could affect your **state tax liability**. Consult legal counsel if you have questions.